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NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

A House for Quanah Parker

In the latter part of 1883 or early in 1884, Texas cattlemen persuaded Quanah Parker, that he should have for his family a house like the ones white men lived in. This was less than ten years after Quanah had led the remnant of a once great tribe into Fort Sill to surrender to the United States Army. It never occurred to Quanah to wonder why the cattlemen could afford to build him a home or to think that it had any connection with their renting tribal grassland from him at much less than its value.

Quanah chose a site for his house on West Cache Creek, soon after the creek left the mountains. The site is about three miles northwest of present-day Cache, Oklahoma. At the time there would not have been another structure from Fort Sill west to Texas, nor from the Wichita Mountains south to the Red River, a distance of forty miles.

The lumber for the house was hauled from Wichita Falls, Texas, an overall distance of sixty miles. The forty miles from the river to the site was mostly a beautiful level to slightly rolling prairie, except for the last seven miles. There the freighters would have touched the edge of the blackjack and post oak area. This scrub timber began where Post Oak Creek was forded.

On many occasions, when I was going to the Grass Money payments, I have used the Post Oak ford the freighters probably used. These payments were often made at the reservation located just west of the town of Cache. Post Oak and West Cache occupy the same bottom in this locality, and the freighters probably stayed to the west side of West Cache.

I have driven freight wagons loaded with lumber over these same prairies, although I was hauling from Lawton instead of to Wichita Falls. I assure you it was no job for a sissy. For the last forty miles of their journey, there would not have been so much as a culvert.

The lumber for Quanah's house, according to my figures, would have made fifteen to seventeen large loads—loads that would have required four to five yoke of oxen, or three span of mules. Assuming the lumber was hauled during the dry summer season, the prairie proper would have presented no problem, as it becomes almost as hard and unyielding as a cement roadway. But the first thirty miles of the journey offered three challenges.

The first, of course, was the Red River. If you catch it at low ebb,

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It was the middle of the afternoon before I could saddle my horse and leave for the Martny camp. Jim's family allotments, about six miles down Cache Creek, were the last individual Indian land. When the creek left his land it entered the Big Pasture Reserve, the ranch country. His allotments adjoined the reserve on both their south and east sides. There were two roads into Jim's camp, and both dead-ended. One, the road I used to reach the camp, came from the west and north; the other ran north from the camp to a gate into the reserve. The latter road was the one Jim used when going directly to Lawton or to the subagency at Fort Sill. A concept of the camp's isolation will help the reader to have a clearer understanding of subsequent events. As I have said, the evidence is mostly circumstantial.

I found Albert conscious, lying on his platform bed under the family's large brush arbor. As I remember it, their arbor was the largest family arbor I saw during the time I was in the Comanche country, probably thirty by thirty-six feet. It had a clearance of a full six feet at the edge or eaves and probably eight feet at the center. It was large enough for platform beds for all, besides a sizable living space. I saw larger arbors constructed for camp meetings, but not for family use.

Albert's mother left us boys to our talk, and I took over the job of switching the flies away with a leafy twig. Of course Albert knew nothing of the happenings, after the first few jumps made by the excited horse, until he regained consciousness, completely trussed up in splints. Beyond question, he was the worst broken-up human, to be living. I ever saw.

His right arm and leg, splinted, were lying in troughs made from pieces of wood from goods boxes. At that time all canned goods and food sold in cartons, like oatmeal and crackers, were shipped in wooden boxes. I imagine the Martny wives had saved the pieces to start the campfire.

The breaks in this arm and leg were compound fractures. That is to say, one or both bones from each break protruded from the flesh. The breaks in the left arm and leg, which were simple fractures, were held in place with splints from the same material, but were not in troughs. The splints were wrapped and padded with faded calico rags.

Here and there on the limbs and along the side of the body pieces of flesh were gouged out where the horse had stepped on the flesh. His racing shoes must have been new, for they made clean cuts.